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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 TRSE-00 /058 W
----------200303Z 012750 /73
R 191657Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4074
INFO AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMCONSUL NAPLES

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: PCI SUFFERS LOSSES IN APRIL 17 ADMINISTRATIVE ELEC-
TIONS WHILE OTHER PARTIES GAIN

1. SUMMARY. ON APRIL 17 ELECTIONS INVOLVING NEARLY
4000,000 VOTERS (1.1 PERCENT/ OF THE ELECTORATE) 34 COMMUNAL
COUNCILS, AND ONE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL WERE HELD. THE DC
PERFORMED WELL, IMPROVING ITS TOTALS IN THE COMMUNAL CON-
TESTS SLIGHTLY, BOTH AGAINST THE RESULTS OF THE 1976 PARLIA-
MENTARY ELECTIONS AND THOSE OF THE PREVIOUS COMMUNAL
ELECTIONS, WHILE AT LEAST HOLDING ITS OWN IN ALL AREAS.
THE PCI CAN ONLY BE DISAPPOINTED WITH THE OUTCOME. IN
THE COMMUNES THE PCI VOTE FELL 8.8 PERCENT AGAINST 1976,
DROPPING THE PARTY TO THE LEVEL ACHEIVED IN THE LAST
COMMUNAL ELECTIONS IN 1972 (28.8 PERCENT). THE SOLE BRIGHT
SPOT FOR THE COMMUNISTS WERE SOME MARGINAL GAINS IN THE
VOTING FOR THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL IN ECONOMICALLY
DEPRESSED ROVIGO. INTERESTINGLY, THE PSI, PSDI, AND
PRI ALL RECORDED SIGNIFICANT INCREASES AGAINST THEIR
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1976 RESULTS IN THE AREAS POLLED WHILE THE MSI-DN
SUFFERED LOSSES ACROSS THE BOARD. END SUMMARY.

2. ON APRIL 17 NEARLY 400,000/VOTERS 1.1 PERCENT OF
THE ELECTROATE, WENT TO THE POLLS TO ELECT 34 COMMUNAL
COUNCILS AND A PROVINCIAL COUNCIL FOR ROVIGO IN THE
VENETO REGION. OF THE 34 COMMUNIES VOTING, WHICH

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WERE SPREAD FROM THE TRENTO-ALTO ADIGE REGION IN THE
NORTH TO CALABRIA IN THE SOUTH, 20 HAVE OVER 5,000
VOTERS AND THEREFORE MUST SELECT THEIR LOCAL ADMINI-
STRATIONS ON THE BASIS OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION.

2. VOTERS IN THE PROVINCE OF ROVIGO, THE POOREST PROVINCE
IN THE VENETO REGION, WERE CALLED TO THE POLLS BECAUSE
OF A STALEMATE IN THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT.
ALTHOUGH THE PCI GAINED SLIGHTLY AND THE DC VOTE WAS
DOWN 2.6 PERCENT IN COMPARISON WITH THE RESULTS OF THE
JUNE 1976 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, THE OUTCOME WAS
ALMOST EXACTLY THAT OF THE PREVIOUS PROVINCILA
ELECTIONS (THOSE OF JUNE 1975) AND THERE WAS, THERFORE,
NO CHANGE IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL,
WHERE THE DC CONTINUES TO HOLD TEN SEATS TO THE PCI'S
NINE. THE PSI, THOUGH SUFFERING SMALL LOSSES,
HELD ON TO ITS THREE SEATS. THE MSI-DN AND THE PSDI
HAVE ONE SEAT APIECE.

3. IN THE LARGEST OF THE COMMUNES VOTING,
CASTELLAMARE DI STABIA IN THE PROVINCE OF NAPLES,
THE DC WAS UP 7.3 PERCENT FROM JUNE 1976 WHILE THE
PCI WAS DOWN OVER 12 PERCENT. THE DC RESULT WAS
ALSO A CONSIDERABLE IMPROVEMENT ON THE PARTY'S PER-
FORMANCE IN THE PREVIOUS COMMUNAL ELECTIONS (NOVEMBER
1972) WHEREAS THE PCI SHOWED A SLIGHT DECLINE. THE
LAY PARTIES ALSO DID WELL IN CASTELLAMARE. THE PSI
AND PSDI BOTH REGISTERED GAINS WHILE THE PRI JUMPED
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FROM 2.9 PRCENT IN JUNE 1976 TO 6.8 PERCENT ON
APRIL 17.

4. OVERALL IN THE COMMUNAL ELECTIONS THE DC ENJOYED
A SMALL GAIN (1.3 PERCENT) OVER ITS PERFORMANCE IN 1976
IN THE TOWNS WHICH VOTED ON APRIL 17. PCI TOTALS
WERE DOWN 8.8 PERCENT. THE PRI, PSI, AND PSDI ALL GAINED
WHILE THE MSI-DN VOTE WAS DOWN ACROSS THE BOARD. THE
NEWLY-FORMED, RIGHTWING DEMOCRAZIA NAZIONALE, PARTICI-
PATING IN ITS FIRST ELECTION, RECEIVED SOME VOTES BUT
DID NOT MAKE SERIUS INROADS AGAINST ENTRENCHED MSI-DN
STRENGTH. IN COMPARISON WITH THE 1972 COMMUNAL ELECTIONS
THE OVERALL DC VOTE IN THE AREAS PARTICIPATING, AT
39.2 PERCENT, WAS AN IMPROVEMENT OF 2.6 PERCENT. THE
COMMUNIST TOTAL OF 28I PERCENT WAS ABOUT THE SAME AS
IN 1972.

5. COMMENT. THE PCI CAN ONLY BE DISAPPOINTED WITH
THE OUTCOME OF THE APRIL 17 VOTING. IN ROVIGO, WHICH

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IS THE VENETO'S LEAST PROSPEROUS PROVINCE AND WHERE
THE PCI AHS BEEN FAIRLY STRONG FOR A NUMBER OF
YEARS, THE COMMUNISTS ACHIEVED ONLY MARGINAL GAINS,
LEAVING THE COMPOSITION OF THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL
UNCHANGED AND PERPETUATING THE STALEMENT IN THE LOCAL
ADMINISTRATION. THE RESULTS IN CASTELLAMARE REPRESENT
SOMETHING OF A BLACK EYE FOR THE PCI: FIRST, BECAUSE
THE TOWN HAS BEEN RULED SINCE 1972 BY A PCI MAYOR
AND AN EIGHT-MAN MONOCOLORE PCI ADMINISTRATION AND
SECOND, BECAUSE ENRICO BERLINGUER AND OTHER PCI
LUMINARIES COMPAIGNED PERSONALLY FOR THE PARTY SLATE
IN CATELLAMARE IN THE WEEK BEFORE THE ELECTION. WHILE
THESE RESULTS ARE OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE IN THEMSELVES,
THERE ARE ELEMENTS IN THE PCI LEADERSHIP THAT ARE LIKELY
TO REGARD THEM AS A FURTHER INDICATION OF DISSATISFACTION
AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL WITH THE EQUIVOCATION AND SENSE
OF DRIFT WHICH HAVE MARKED THE PARTY'S ACTIONS SINCE
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THE 1976 ELECTIONS. THIS CONCERN WILL BE HEIGHTENED
BY THE FACT THAT TRADITIONALLY THE PCI AND THE LAY
PARTIES HAVE RECEIVED VOTES FROM DC DISSENTERS IN
LOCAL ELECTIONS. ON THIS OCCASION GAINS RETISTERED
BY THE LAY PARTIES WERE ALMOST CERTAINLY MADE AT THE
EXPENSE OF THE PCI.GARDNER

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